

# 1998 VEGETABLE, MELON, AND TARO HIGHLIGHTS

---

## VEGETABLES AND MELONS

Total production of vegetables and melons for 1998 is estimated at 90.7 million pounds, up 4 percent from 1997. Total farm value rose 10 percent to \$37.5 million on the combined strength of higher farm prices and the increase of production.

Although the strong El Niño episode that spawned dry conditions since early 1997 finally came to an end in 1998, some vegetable and melon growers were hampered by the continued use of water restrictions during the first half of 1998. In general, weather conditions were a favorable mix of sunshine and showers for the northern islands of Kauai and Oahu. The southern half of the State, on the other hand, was generally drier. Farmers on Maui, Molokai, and the Big Island had to contend with water restrictions, both mandatory and voluntary, and a lack of natural rainfall. The overall effect that the dry weather had on vegetable and melon growers depended on the availability of irrigation water.



Watermelon production surpassed all other vegetable and melons with 15.8 million pounds in 1998, down 6 percent from 1997. Head cabbage came in second with 15.3 million pounds, up 18 percent from the previous year. Tomatoes topped the revenue list with \$5.6 million in farm income during 1998, a 2-percent increase from 1997. Watermelons came in distant second, generating \$3.3 million in farm revenue, up 10 percent from a year ago.

## TARO

Taro production is estimated at 6.0 million pounds for 1998, up 9 percent from 1997 and the highest total in three years. The combined farm price for poi and Chinese taro averaged a record high 53 cents per pound in 1998, up 4 percent from a year ago. Higher production and farm prices enabled taro growers to post farm revenues of \$3.2 million, up 13 percent from 1997 and the second highest total on record.

Taro for processing totaled 5.7 million pounds in 1998, up 12 percent from 1997. Most of the gains were made by poi taro growers on the county of Kauai. The adoption of improved cultural practices to decrease the incidence of pocket rot disease, along with generally favorable weather, helped Kauai increase taro production by 15 percent in 1998.

Fresh taro sales, comprised mainly of Chinese taro, decreased 25 percent to total 300,000 pounds. Adverse weather conditions were the primary reason for the decline in production.